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Text of Democrats' Response to Reagan's Speech

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 27 — Following is the text of a response to President Reagan's address tonight given on behalf of Congressional Democrats by Senator Christopher J. Dodd. The text was made available by the Senator's office before Mr. Reagan's speech.

Good evening. Unfortunately, tonight the President gave a speech intended to bring people to their feet, not to their senses. In the months and years that follow this evening, after the applause has faded and the ringing phrases are forgotten, Americans will have to live with the choices we make in this fateful time of decision.

In the past, we as a nation have learned painfully that the truth is never as simple as some would paint it. Charts and statistics can be used or misused to prove any side of a case. And speeches can sound very good without being very right.

So first of all, let me state clearly that on some very important things, all Americans stand in agreement.

We will oppose the establishment of Marxist states in Central America.

We will not accept the creation of Soviet military bases in Central America.

And, we will not tolerate the placement of Soviet offensive missiles in Central America — or anywhere in this hemisphere.

Ready to Fight

Finally, we are fully prepared to defend our security and the security of the Americas, if necessary, by military means.

All patriotic Americans share these goals. But many of us in Congress, Democrats and Republicans alike, disagree with the President because we believe the means he has chosen will not fulfill them.

Those of us who oppose the President's policy believe that he is mistaken in critical ways. To begin with, we believe the Administration fundamentally misunderstands the causes of the conflict in Central America. We cannot afford to found so important a policy on ignorance — and the painful truth is that many of our highest offi-

cials seem to know as little about Central America in 1983 as we knew about Indochina in 1963.

I've lived with the people in this region. Let me share some facts with you about Central America.

Poverty and Deprivation

Most of the people there are appallingly poor. They can't afford to feed their families when they're hungry. They can't find a doctor for them when they're sick. They live in rural shacks with dirt floors or city slums without plumbing or clean water. The majority can't read or write; many of them don't even know how to count.

It takes all five Spanish-speaking countries of Central America more than a year to produce what this nation does in less than three days. Virtually none of even that meager amount ever reaches the bulk of the people. In short, a very few live in isolated splendor while the very many suffer in shantytown squalor. In country after country, dictatorship or military dominance has stifled democracy and destroyed human rights.

If Central America were not racked with poverty, there would be no revolution. If Central America were not racked with hunger, there would be no revolution. If Central America were not racked with injustices, there would be no revolution. In short, there would be nothing for the Soviets to exploit. But unless those oppressive conditions change, that region will continue to seethe with revolution — with or without the Soviets.

A Dark Tunnel

Instead of trying to do something about the factors which breed revolution, this Administration has turned to massive military buildups at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. Its policy is ever-increasing military assistance, endless military training, even hiring our own paramilitary guerrillas. This is a formula for failure. And it is a proven prescription for picking a loser. The American people know that we have been down this road before — and that it only leads to a dark tunnel of endless intervention.

Tonight the President himself told us that things were not going well in Central America. But for this the President cannot blame Congress. We have given him what he has asked.

Seven hundred million in economic and military assistance has been delivered or is on its way to El Salvador since Ronald Reagan came to office, all at his request and all with Congressional approval. One of every five Salvadoran soldiers fighting for its government was trained right here in the United States. American soldiers are there now training Salvadoran army units which are employing modern weapons built in American factories.

Now the President asks for an even greater commitment. His requests for El Salvador alone will bring the total aid to that country during his term to more than \$1 billion.

One billion dollars to counter a rebel army that, according to all reports, does not exceed 7,000 guerrillas.

That means you are paying \$140,000 in hard-earned tax dollars for each one of those guerrillas we are trying to defeat.

While your tax dollars have been pouring into El Salvador, the money skimmed off by that nation's rich is leaving the country. For every dollar we've sent in, more than a dollar has gone out — to numbered accounts in Zurich or to buy stocks on Wall Street. It raises the question of why we should invest in the future of El Salvador when the wealthiest citizens of that country are investing in Swiss banks.

What return have we achieved for all we have spent? The army in El Salvador has been reluctant to fight — and it is led by an officer corps working a nine-to-five shift with weekends off. Land reform has been abandoned. At least 30,000 civilians have been killed and the majority of them have been victims of the Government's own security forces. American nuns and labor advisors have been murdered — and the judicial system is so intimidated that it cannot even bring accused murderers to trial.

For those 30,000 murders, confirmed by our own Embassy, there have been fewer than 200 convictions.

'Folly, Pure and Simple'

American dollars alone cannot buy military victory — that is the lesson of the painful past and of this newest conflict in Central America. If we con-

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